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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Identification of Marine Vertebrate and Invertebrate Candidate Species for Listing Under the Endangered Species Act

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), NOAA, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of development of list of candidate species.

SUMMARY: NMFS identifies vertebrate and invertebrate marine species as candidates for possible addition to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. NMFS is soliciting information concerning the status of these species and nominations of additional species that appear to warrant listing consideration. This notice is not a proposal for listing and the involved species do not receive substantive or procedural protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. NMFS does, however, encourage Federal agencies and other appropriate parties to take these species into account in project planning. This candidate list identifies only animal species; NMFS will identify candidate marine plant species in a future notice.

DATE: Comments may be submitted until further notice.

ADDRESS: Comments should be sent to Dr. Nancy Foster, Director, Office of Protected Resources and Habitat Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service, Washington, DC 20235.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia Montano, Protected Species Management Division, Office of Protected Resources and Habitat Programs, NMFS (202/673-5351).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) requires determinations of whether species of wildlife and plants are endangered or threatened based on the best available scientific and commercial data. "Species" includes any species or subspecies of fish, wildlife or plant, and any distinct population segment of any vertebrate species that interbreeds

when mature. NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service share responsibilities under the ESA. With some exceptions, NMFS is responsible for species that reside all or the major portion of their lifetime in marine waters. Candidate species are those species identified for listing consideration. NMFS will conduct comprehensive reviews of the status of each species to determine which warrant listing as endangered or threatened under the ESA. NMFS is also developing guidelines to be used to assign listing priorities to candidate species.

NMFS requests comments and solicits information concerning the status of species in the accompanying table, especially in regard to past and present population status and distribution; threats affecting the species; and, if appropriate, identification of critical habitat. NMFS solicits nominations of additional species that appear to warrant listing consideration; information on taxonomic changes for any of the listed species; and more appropriate common names.

NMFS intends to consider all data received in response to this notice, to make appropriate amendments to the accompanying table, and to indicate intentions with regard to future listing actions.

In the future, NMFS will compile and publish a list of candidate marine plant species. To ensure that the list is complete, NMFS is soliciting biological information and recommendations on candidate marine plants native to U.S. waters. Proposed candidates should be categorized as fully marine, fully aquatic estuarine, or inter-tidal estuarine.

In the following table of candidate species, the common name appears as the first entry followed by the scientific name, the family name, and the area of distribution under consideration for listing.

Date: August 26, 1988.

Nancy Foster,
Director, Office of Protected Resources and
Habitat Programs, National Marine Fisheries
Service.

LIST OF CANDIDATE VERTEBRATE AND INVERTEBRATE MARINE SPECIES

Common name	Scientific name	Family	Area under construction
Marine Mammals			
Amazon River Dolphin ¹	<i>Inia geoffrensis</i>	Iniidae	South America.
Ganges River Dolphin ¹	<i>Platanista Gangetica</i>	Platanistidae	India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan.

LIST OF CANDIDATE VERTEBRATE AND INVERTEBRATE MARINE SPECIES—Continued

Common name	Scientific name	Family	Area under construction
Indus River Dolphin ¹	<i>Platanista minor</i>	do	Pakistan.
La Plata Dolphin ¹	<i>Pontoporia blainvilliei</i>	Pontoporidae	Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina.
Bottlenose Dolphin ²	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Delphinidae	U.S. Mid-Atlantic (Coastal Stock).
Northern Bottlenose Whale	<i>Hyperoodon ampullatus</i>	Ziphiidae	North Atlantic.
Beluga Whale	<i>Delphinapterus leucas</i>	Monodontidae	AK (Cook Inlet population).
Juan Fernandez Fur Seal	<i>Arctoccephalus philippi</i>	Otariidae	Chile.
Japanese Sea Lion	<i>Zalophus californianus japonicus</i>	do	Japan, North and South Korea.
Northern (Steller) Sea Lion ³	<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>	do	AK.
Northern Fur Seal ³	<i>Callorhinus ursinus</i>	do	AK.
Saimaa Seal	<i>Phoca hispida saimensis</i>	Phocidae	Finland.
Kurl Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina stejnegeri</i>	do	USSR (Kurl Sea).
Reptiles			
Flatback Turtle	<i>Chelonia depressa</i>	Cheloniidae	Australia.
Fishes			
Gulf of Mexico Sturgeon ⁴	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi</i>	Acipenseridae	AL, FL, MS, LA.
Atlantic Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>	do	North America—Atlantic Coastal Waters.
Large-tooth Sawfish	<i>Pristis perotteti</i>	Pristidae	North and South America—Tropical and Sub-tropical Waters.
Small-tooth Sawfish	<i>Pristis pectinata</i>	do	Do.
Mollusks			
Southern Giant Clam	<i>Tridacna derasa</i>	Tridacnidae	Indo-Pacific.
Giant Clam	<i>Tridacna gigas</i>	do	Do.
Starlet Sea Anemone	<i>Nematostella vectensis</i>	Edwardsiidae	U.K. and North America.

¹ Status review under Endangered Species Act in progress (52 FR 13280, April 22, 1987).² Status review under Marine Mammal Protection Act in progress.³ Status review under Marine Mammal Protection Act completed.⁴ Currently identified by USFWS as a candidate species (50 FR 37960, September 18, 1985).

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COPY

DATE: April 18, 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Fx1 - James E. Douglas, Jr.

FROM:

F/AKR - Robert W. McVey

SUBJECT:

Recommendations for Candidate Species

In response to your memorandum of March 29, the Alaska Region of the National Marine Fisheries Service recommends that the following species of marine mammals be considered as candidate species for threatened or endangered status under the Endangered Species Act.

1. Northern Sea Lion - Eumetopias jubatus

Northern sea lions have declined severely in abundance in the past decade to well below their apparent OSP, and are undoubtedly depleted. The causes of this decline are unknown at present. A current status review of the species is in progress by the National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) to assess the severity of the decline. This status review may justify a "threatened" designation for this species.

2. Northern Fur seal - Callorhinus ursinus

The northern fur seal has been declared to be a depleted species. Further declines to less than half of the pre-1970's population level may warrant classification as a threatened species.

3. North Pacific Harbor Seal - Phoca vitulina

Harbor seals in Alaska also are on an apparent decline and are undergoing a status review by the NMML. If the species is found to be depleted, we recommend that its designation as a threatened species be considered.

4. Cook Inlet Beluga Whale - Delphinapterus leucas

The Cook Inlet population of beluga whales is a geographically isolated remnant population. This size of the population has been estimated to number only 300-400 individuals. With its current estimated rates of natural mortality, native harvest, and other human impacts, there is concern that the population is not able to be sustained by annual recruitment. A status review

glen



is needed as well as field research to obtain better information on population size and condition. We believe that threatened species designation for this population is warranted to provide management opportunities to protect the population from future decline.

We understand that our nomination of candidate species is only the first step in a lengthy process of gathering and reviewing information leading to a decision regarding status designation. In that regard, the Alaska Region is in the process of assisting this effort by having already initiated a review of the status of the Cook Inlet beluga population. We will provide this review to you at a later date when it is completed.